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ABSTRACT

This paper considers how to more effectively teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in China by incorporating lessons from the 20th century experience of English language learning. The main purpose is to learn more about how English was taught during different periods of time. This information might inform current and future practices by identifying successful and unsuccessful practices in curriculum construction, teaching methods, and instructional materials. Questions considered include the following: Does the teaching appeal to the students' interests and is it related to students' personal experiences? Does the teaching help to develop the students' individuality and creativity? and Does the teaching provide authentic language input and opportunities for communicative practice? It is concluded that historical and contemporary evidence suggests that high quality and effective English teaching in China must do all of these things. Practical suggestions are included, as are extensive historical scholarly references. (Contains 56 references.) (KFT)

History of English Education in China (1919-1998)

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Chapter 1 Introduction

With a growing economy and a widely practiced Open Door Policy, China is experiencing more and more communication with the outside world. Consequently, English now assumes an increasingly important position in the school curriculum as well as in people's daily lives. From the mid-1990s, English has become one of the three core elements in China's College Entrance Examinations (the other two being Chinese and Math). According to Ford (1988), "there are more Chinese currently studying English than there are Americans. Estimates range as high as 250 million Chinese students of English" (p.2).

How can the quality of English teaching in China be enhanced? Considerable research has been conducted in the field of English as a foreign language (EFL) in and outside of China. The attention of teachers and policy makers is centered around educational objectives, pedagogy and instructional materials. What should we aim to achieve in language instruction? What kind of teaching methodologies and instructional materials will facilitate students' language learning?

As an EFL teacher in China, I have been asking these questions for a long time. Most of the studies that I read tend to concentrate on recent situations; not many people consider the question from an historical perspective. To fill this gap, I intend in this paper to do a literature review on the history of English education in twentieth- century China (1919-1998). My main purpose is to learn more about how English was taught during different periods of time in Chinese history. My belief is that this history might well inform current and future practices. I will identify successful and unsuccessful practices in curriculum construction, types of teaching methods, and types of instructional materials. I will make this judgement based on some language teaching theories as well as several educational theories that I, as a language teacher, deem to be important. For instance, does the teaching appeal to students' interest and is it related to students' personal experiences (Maley, 1990; Ross, 1992)? Does the teaching help to develop students' creativity and individuality (Dewey, 1997; Duckworth, 1996; Liu, 1999)? Does the teaching provide authentic language input and opportunities for communicative practice (Canale & Swain, 1980; Hadley, 1993)? I believe that the answers to these questions will provide insights for future teachers and policy makers.

Formal education in EFL was initiated by two groups of people in the late Qing Dynasty: Western missionaries[1] and Chinese reformers. They worked separately with totally different aims in mind. The English-speaking missionaries regarded English as the essential path through which they could bring the souls of Chinese to God. The first Anglo-Chinese school, the Gutslaff School, was founded in 1835 in Macao by a British missionary named Robert Morrison (Ford, 1988). Mission schools were well protected by the unequal treaties[2] signed during and after the Opium Wars (1840-1842). The abolition of the civil service examinations in 1905--the system through which the government officials had been recruited--caused more Chinese students to attend mission schools. The reason was that the major medium of instruction in these schools was English, which could provide students with more opportunities in the business world in coastal areas (Deng, 1997). In 1918 China, mission schools enrolled about 8% of the total student population (Ford, 1988). But in the coastal areas like Shanghai, Fuzhou, Guangzhou,

[1] The missionaries, including Roman Catholic missionaries and Protestant missionaries, came from various Western countries, especially the United States (Porter, 1990).

[2] The Treaty of Nanjing in 1842 conceded Hong Kong to Britain and opened five Chinese ports for trade. The Treaty of Tianjin in 1858 gave missionaries permission to run schools in China (Cleverley, 1985).

Nanjing, Beijing, and Suzhou, mission schools trained 40% of China's secondary school students (Ross, 1993). Many Chinese celebrities like Song Meiling, Qian Zhongshu, and Yang Jiang were educated in mission schools in the early twentieth century and had very good command of English.

Another group of people who promoted EFL training in China was the reformers of the Qing Government. Before the Opium Wars, the Chinese attitude toward foreign languages and foreign cultures was one of disdain and rejection. However, the humiliating defeat in the Opium Wars forced the Chinese reformers to see the importance of learning from the West, which began with the learning of the language. In 1862, the Foreign Affairs Office set up the first Chinese-run English language school in Beijing--Tong Wen Guan (Dzau, 1990). This was the beginning of English teaching in government schools. In 1903, English entered the national secondary school curriculum as a required course (Cleverley, 1985) and has stayed ever since.

I will take 1919 as the starting point of my historical review. This year witnessed the so-called "May Fourth Movement," a political and literary student movement named after a demonstration in Beijing on May 4th, 1919 to protest Japanese territorial aggressions in China. This was the point when China became more receptive to the Western idea of democracy and China's economy became more open to the Western world (Chow, 1960). I divide this historical review into three eras: the republican period (1919-1949), the socialist revolutionary period (1949-1978), and the open door period (1978-1998). These periods have distinctive features in not only social, political, and economic arenas, but in English education as well.

Language teaching is never conducted in a vacuum. The evolution of foreign language teaching methodologies in the West reveals that they are largely influenced by the socio-historical background (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). My hypothesis is that this is also duplicated in China. I will examine how English instruction was affected by the ideological emphases of education, which were ultimately determined by the social, political, and economic circumstances of each period. For my conclusion section, I will make predictions for future trends and recommendations for future practices regarding educational objectives, pedagogy, and instructional materials.

There is, of course, considerable variation in language instruction in such a large and diverse country as China. I will address this problem in my descriptions and final recommendations. Although I recognize that such descriptive information may not, in fact, conform to the reality of actual teaching practices across regions, it should provide some sense of the major trends, political purposes, and instructional approaches.

Chapter 2 English Teaching in the Republican Period (1919-1949)

Background

Chinese students started to study abroad in large numbers at the end of the nineteenth century. At the beginning, Japan was the first choice, since the young intelligentsia wanted to learn the advanced science and technology that earned Japan so many victories in war. However, Japan's ambitious expansion in Asia soon repelled Chinese people. By 1915, the United States had gradually become the most important site for Chinese students seeking modern academic training abroad. Anti-Japanese feelings reached their peak on May 4th 1919, when a large student demonstration broke out in Beijing to protest against the Japanese imperialism and the corrupt Beijing government. It was around this time that John Dewey, under the invitation of his former students at Columbia University, began his two-year lecture trip in China's universities (Westbrook, 1991).

Dewey lectured in seven coastal provinces and six interior provinces. He attacked the traditional method of teachers' passing knowledge on to students, which treated knowledge as something ready-made and laden with permanent truth. He thus advocated the child-centered curriculum--to put emphasis on the growth of the child instead of on the subject matter. This, according to Dewey, was important for the democratic society that China was striving to establish, in which each child should have equal opportunities to develop his potentialities and critical judgement about social circumstances (Keenan, 1977).

In addition to Dewey, many other Western educators were hosted in China after World War I, including E. P. Cubberly, W. H. Kilpatrick, Von Driesch, Bertrand Russell, Paul Monroe, and Rabindranath Tagore (Cleverley, 1985). Their ideas brought about many experiments and reforms in China's education arena. In 1922, a new education system[3] modeled after the American system was set up, with six years of primary education, six years of secondary education, and four years of higher education (Gregg, 1946). The new objectives of the Chinese education attacked the old notion of imparting a fixed body of knowledge and advocated the development of individuality. To realize this goal, more practical, vocational instruction was promoted in schools, with the reduction of Chinese classics and the introduction of social and industrial subjects. The purpose was to correlate the work of the classroom to the demands of real life (Stauffer, 1979).

As China opened its door to the Western ideal of democracy, English became even more important in the Chinese society. In coastal cities, it was the language of business, commerce, finance, and education. British and American movies, newspapers, magazines, and posters could be seen everywhere (Fu, 1986). College admissions were based on the results of competitive entrance examinations that required foreign-language competence (Yeh, 1990). All these made English-language teaching flourish in urban areas, where foreign-language proficiency was perceived as a gateway to social, economic, and geographical mobility.

The quality of teachers contributed directly to the quality of language teaching. Many Chinese professors had received their academic training abroad and had returned to transmit their knowledge acquired in the West. A considerable number of foreigners, missionaries or non-missionaries, were also invited to teach in China. Statistics showed that in 1923, the ratio of

[3] The previous education system, patterned on Japanese practice, was set up in 1904, with five years for lower elementary school, four years for higher elementary school, five years for middle school, three years for high school, and three or four years for university (Cleverley, 1985).

Chinese to foreign faculty in China's colleges was one to one (Porter, 1990). Of the total of 4,890 faculty and administrators of the 41 colleges and universities registered with the Ministry of Education in 1934, as many as 3,544 people held advanced degrees from foreign academic institutions and were quite at ease operating in a foreign-language environment (Yeh, 1990).

The Kumingtang's success in uniting China in 1927 created an upsurge of nationalism across the country. For some time, foreign languages were considered an element of disunity and time allotted to foreign language study was reduced in the national curriculum. However, urban students were still willing to invest time and money to learn English because of the economic benefits that English could bring (Ross, 1993).

The teaching of English, of course, varied greatly from the coast to the hinterland, from government schools to mission schools. Although it is difficult to obtain primary documents outlining the English curriculum, textbooks, and detailed descriptions of teaching methods in this period, it is still possible to get from some secondary sources the general characteristics of English teaching that existed at the time.

Educational Objectives

As Fu (1986) documented, the objectives and requirements of English study set at Chinese secondary schools during the republican period were as follows:

At the middle-school level, students should: 1) be able to use simple everyday English for communication; 2) lay a good foundation for further language development; 3) develop their language experiences through using English; and 4) develop interest in studying foreign countries through the learning of English. At the high school level, students should: 1) learn to use practical English; 2) have a taste of contemporary English literature; 3) lay the basis for using English as a tool to acquire knowledge of their specialization; 4) develop their language experiences through using English; and 5) develop interest in studying foreign cultures through the learning of English. At the college level, English was required in the first two years, regardless of students' majors. The objective was to elevate students' reading and translation abilities for their studying abroad or finding a job (Fu, 1986).

There was no evidence of a unified English curriculum in mission schools. Generally speaking, their curricula had to become more and more secularized due to the upsurge of nationalism growing from the May Fourth Movement. The orientation of many mission schools changed from cultivating converts to building a true center of learning so that they could attract better students. For instance, Leighton Stuart, the first chancellor of Yenching University (founded in 1920), gave students the freedom not to attend religious services (Li, 1977). St. John's University stressed utilitarianism, universalism, and practical benefits to mankind in its curriculum. Francis Pott, President of the university from 1890 to 1938, argued that "The study of the English language and literature will conduce to the broadening of the mental horizon of our students" (Yeh, 1990, p. 62).

Pedagogy

The prevailing teaching approach used in Chinese secondary schools was the Grammar-Translation Method, which dominated foreign language teaching in Europe from the 1840s to the 1940s. In this approach, language was learned in order to read its literature or gain mental discipline and intellectual development (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). It was very similar to the methods used to learn classical Chinese, with an emphasis on word study and grammar. Selected

model texts were analyzed in detail. There was a lot of rote memorization and translation on a word-for-word basis (Dzau, 1990).

Another approach experimented with by some teachers was the Direct Method, which was popular in Europe in the early twentieth century. It originated from increased communication among Europeans, which created a demand for oral proficiency in foreign languages. In this approach, classroom instruction was conducted only in the target language and grammar was taught inductively. Of course, this method relied heavily on the teachers' oral skills (Richards & Rodgers, 1986).

In mission schools, books and methods used in the West were common. Teachers, many of whom were missionaries, taught in English and questioned students in English. There was an emphasis on practice in the target language, more exposure to the language through extensive reading, use of English as a medium of instruction and for social intercourse. With so much exposure and communicative activities, students learned to express themselves in English fairly well (Dzau, 1990).

In mission colleges, there was an emphasis on conversation and composition. English was almost always taught by native speakers. Composition was favored over translation because of the pedagogical differences embedded in these two approaches:

> Translation exercises cast college students in the role of interpreters between two languages and cultures, while composition exercise aimed at the mastery of self-expression in the chosen language. Translation exercises required that the acquisition of foreign-language capability take place with constant reference to the native language, while composition exercises freed the students to seek self-expression in accordance with newly acquired foreign norms (Yeh, 1990, pp. 14-15).

The emphasis on conversation in foreign schools was obvious in the medium of instruction and the atmosphere of campus life. For instance, at St. John's University, all courses, except the Chinese language course, were conducted in English. Correspondences, speeches, and performances were all done in English. Moreover, students and staff also dressed in the American way and celebrated American festivals (Fu, 1986). Similarly, at Tsinghua University, which was established by the American Boxer Indemnity funds to prepare Chinese students to study in the US, English was the primary language of communication: periodical and yearly publications and reports of the school's administrative associations, the president's talks, lectures by both Chinese and foreigners, the students' themes, reports on experiments, and various theatrical performances were nearly all presented in English (Israel, 1982-83).

The emphasis on writing was revealed in the entrance exams of mission colleges and Chinese universities supported by American funds. For example, the English entrance exam of Nankai University (supported by Rockefeller Foundation) in 1924 devoted one-half of its space to composition. Students were asked to write personal letters, summarize the content of a favorite book, and describe their native city. Similarly, the English exam of Tsinghua University required students to write a composition on a choice of three topics. In addition to being graded for grammatical accuracy, students were scored on "diction and use of idiomatic English," "paragraphing," "unity, coherence, proportion, proper arrangement, and clear thinking" (Yeh, 1990, p. 14).

Chinese colleges, however, still employed the Grammar-Translation Method. Since, according to the curriculum, listening and speaking skills were supposed to be developed in

secondary schools, it was now time for reading and translation skills. The emphasis on grammar and translation was because state-sponsored Chinese universities aimed at training students to extract foreign-language information for domestic use, and hence treated English proficiency as merely instrumental to the reading of foreign texts. For instance, the English admissions examination for 1924 at National Beijing University put clear emphasis on grammar and translation: part I tested the applicants' reading comprehension. Part II tested their grasp of English gender, number, case, tense, and so forth. Part III was a translation exercise from Chinese into English. A similar emphasis on grammar and translation was also evident in the English examination papers of a number of other state-sponsored institutions, e.g. to identify grammatical errors, to analyze a complex sentence etc. Composition was limited to 300 words and carried very little weight in the total score (Yeh, 1990).

In the hinterland, whether the emphasis was put on translation or on composition was often determined by circumstances rather than by pedagogical choices. There was always a shortage of capable language teachers in both colleges and secondary schools. In rural schools, the medium of instruction was primarily Chinese, since the teachers themselves were far from fluent in spoken English. Much time in the classroom was spent doing verbatim translation from English into Chinese. Attention was focused on reading the text. Listening comprehension, speaking, and writing were completely ignored. Low quality of English learning was also due to lack of incentives. The mid-1920s statistics showed that less than 10% of high-school graduates in provincial towns went to college; most students found no use for English in their lives. Therefore, there was debate over the wisdom of making English a required subject in the secondary-school curriculum. Some people considered teaching English a waste of time and resources in rural areas. But some others argued that if English was not taught in these areas, some students might lose the chance of going to college (Yeh, 1990).

Instructional Materials

Government schools during the republican period used many kinds of textbooks. Zhou Yueran's *English Model Reader* (published in 1917) was a popular series. There was no Chinese in the books; all explanations were written in English. It emphasized practical everyday English; grammar teaching relied on induction, rhetoric and composition. The fourth book used excerpts from British and American classic literature. Another widely used book was Lin Yutang's *Kaiming Middle School English Textbook* (published in 1927). It started with oral language and paid a lot of attention to idiomatic English, with short stories and poems that appealed to students' interest. There were a lot of grammar textbooks as well, e.g. W. M. Tanner's *Correct English, and* D. Lattimore's *A Complete English Grammar for Chinese Students* (Fu, 1986).

Mission schools during this period adopted original English works as textbooks. For instance, Li (1977) recalled that in her secondary school (Shanghai St. Maria School) in the 1920s, she never read any simplified versions of English works. What students read included Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* and Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, *Merchant of Venice,* etc. Other popular readers used in high schools included such books as *The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, *Stories from the Arabian Nights*, *The King of the Golden River*, *Fifty Famous Stories Retold*, *Treasure Island*, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, *David Copperfield*, *and The Vicar of Wakefield* (Wang, 1981). In addition to English, many other courses such as math, physics, and chemistry all used original English textbooks (Fu, 1986). For example, in Nankai Middle School in the 1920s--the alma mater of many Chinese political leaders such as Premier Zhou Enlai--students learned algebra, geometry, calculus, chemistry, and world

geography mainly through the use of English textbooks and English terminology (Yeh, 1990). This suggests an added incentive for those who learned the language, and conversely, a penalty for those who did not.

In colleges, both foreign and Chinese-run, textbooks of many other courses (social science and natural science) also used original English works (Fu, 1986). In the 1920s and 1930s, except for courses on Chinese language, literature, history, and philosophy, nearly all university subjects--science, engineering, medicine, business, education, economics, social sciences, and law--relied heavily on English textbooks and reference materials. Regarding textbooks for English language classes, for both English and non-English majors, most texts stressed the study of literature and deprecated commercial and journalistic English (Yeh, 1990).

Results of Teaching and Learning

Students' English level varied a lot. In mission schools and some very good government schools and universities, especially those in coastal areas, students could be very proficient in English listening, speaking, reading and writing. A middle school graduate could have a vocabulary of 1,500 to 2,000 words, be able to handle everyday communication, and write essays of two to three hundred words. A high school graduate could have a vocabulary of 3,000 words. After entering college, such students could read literature of their field of specialization, understand English speeches, conduct conversations, and write essays of over a thousand words. However, in schools of provincial towns that had a lack of qualified teachers, students did not have basic skills in reading or writing. If not going to higher institutions, they likely forgot most of what they learned (Fu, 1986).

The side effect of the importance of English in society was the decline in respect for and capability in Chinese history and language. Everything western was worshipped. Many graduates from mission schools found it difficult to work with their own people and were ignorant about rural China (Yeh, 1990; Deng, 1997; Israel, 1982-83; Gregg, 1946). As a student of Nankai University wrote in 1924, "The university teachers teach American politics, American economy, American commerce, American railways, American this, American that. They praise the United States in the same way old scholars praised the sages Yao, Shun, Yu, Tang and the like" (Price, 1979, p. 97). Moreover, many rural students who were not good at English lost opportunities of entering college (Yeh, 1990).

Summary

The republican period saw a relatively liberal intellectual atmosphere throughout the country. Fresh ideas from abroad were greeted without constraint, and conflicting schools of thought were discussed and experimented with (Chen, 1981). Economic impetus was dominating in the society, and consequently, education was modeled toward a pragmatic direction.

English teaching during this period varied greatly across the country. The objectives set in the curriculum revealed, to some extent, the objectives of the new educational system, e.g., building up students' interests and learning English through daily practice. Teaching methods and instructional materials in the coastal areas, especially in mission schools, helped to bring authentic language use to students.

Chapter 3 English Teaching in the Socialist Revolutionary Period (1949-1978)

Background

The communist victory in 1949 led to the establishment of a completely new social, political, and economic system in China. To espouse the new proletarian ideology, a new educational system had to be set up as well. The Korean War in the early 1950s and the Cold War between the East and West resulted in the national campaign in China to "resist America" (Price, 1979, p. 32). Mission schools were accused of serving "imperialist and colonialist ends," and religion was described as "the opiate of the people" (Cleverley, 1985, p. 118). By 1952, all foreign-run schools and higher institutions were taken over by the communist government, merged or dissolved in the reorganization process. Foreign companies were shut down. Few Westerners remained to teach in China. Teachers and scholars, either willingly or unwillingly, condemned their past and the so-called "American cultural aggression" (Price, 1979, p. 97). The intellectuals (including Dewey and his disciples) were accused of having a bourgeois outlook with their "preoccupation with ideas of democracy and individualism" (Chen, 1981, p. 203).

Parallel to the resistance of the US was China's intimacy with the Soviet Union. Facing the tremendous task of national construction and economic development, China borrowed relentlessly from the Soviet Union, including educational structures, curriculum, pedagogy, and teaching materials. Consequently, Russian became the most important foreign language in China's schools and universities in the 1950s. Students shunned learning English because of its association with imperialism. To remedy the shortage of teachers, many teachers of English were ordered to switch to teaching Russian. They had to rely on short-term courses or self study just to be a little ahead of the students (Chen, 1981). English teaching was mainly limited to some specialized foreign language institutions, which were meant to train foreign language teachers, translators, and interpreters (Zhang, 1984).

The late 1950s saw the Sino-Soviet split and the discarding of Soviet models. Now the concepts of independence and self-reliance were emphasized. The slogan changed from "Learn from the Soviet Union" into "Learn from all the advanced experiences of the world" (Dzau, 1990, p. 19). With the trend to move education toward a more academic orientation, foreign languages became a compulsory subject in China's college entrance examinations in 1962 (Ross, 1993). In 1964, the *Seven-year Guideline for Foreign Language Education* was published. English was designated to be the first foreign language in China. The teaching of English experienced a short period of revival in the early 1960s. Western language teaching methodologies, especially the Audiolingual Method, were consulted and experimented with in a certain scale (Fu, 1986).

This did not last long, though. To further transform the ideology of students and consolidate his power, Mao Zedong launched the unprecedented Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in 1966. Under such slogans as "the correctness or incorrectness of the ideological and political line decides everything" and "ideology and politics are the commander and the soul," school curriculum was infected with political content (Cleverley, 1985, p. 186). According to Mao, better learning took place outside school: on the farm, in the factory, on the streets. Students were supposed to be educated more directly and more effectively if participating in labor and production than just learning at school (Chen, 1981). Thus, physical labor in factories and on farms became mandatory for students and staff. This was the so-called "kai men ban xue" (Open Door Schooling), which was meant to bring the country's educational system closer to the

needs of society (especially agriculture and industry) and to give a practical content to education (Cleverley, 1985).

Everything foreign came under suspicion and was labeled "du cao" (poisonous weeds). Most schools stopped teaching English. Many Western trained scholars and foreign language teachers, accused of worshiping the West or spying for foreign countries, were abused physically and mentally by the Red Guards. Foreign classic literature was burned or stored up; contemporary literature was banned from import; foreign newspapers, radio, and movies were seen as the forbidden area (Fu, 1986). By 1970, less than half of China's secondary schools taught any foreign languages (Ross, 1993).

In the early 1970s, resumed relationships with the West, marked by China's regaining of its legal position in the United Nations in 1971 and President Nixon's visit to China in 1972, brought English back to the school curriculum. However, it was not considered a tool for an individual's intellectual and academic development, nor was it seen as a gateway for China's interaction with the other nations. Instead, it was still used as a weapon for preaching political dogma. Most students found no use for learning English, and teachers did not dare to be too enthusiastic about teaching the language. Afraid of inadvertently saying anything politically wrong, teachers had to stick to what the authorities had published (Price, 1979). If the teacher memorized a lesson and taught the students to do the same, no one risked criticism for spreading unorthodox ideas. This resembled the ancient Chinese custom of memorizing the approved classics (Porter, 1990).

The atmosphere in China was highly politicized until the death of Mao and the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976, especially the political and economic reforms carried out in 1978. English teaching during these 30 years yielded very low quality in students' overall language proficiency owing to politics and ideology that dominated the entire curriculum at all levels of schooling.

Educational Objectives

In the early 1950s, Russian was the primary foreign language in China. It was not until the Sino-Soviet split in the late 1950s that the first national English syllabus for primary, secondary, and higher education was compiled (Fu, 1986). English was seen as an important tool for "developing cultural and scientific knowledge, engaging in international interaction, fostering cultural exchanges, and increasing understanding between peoples of different countries" (Adamson & Morris, 1997, p. 13). The teaching objectives set for high school graduates were for students to master a vocabulary of 1,500 words, have basic knowledge in pronunciation, spelling, and grammar, be able to read simplified English texts, and be able to do exercises in constructing sentences, answering questions, and translation (Fu, 1986).

In the early 1960s when China discarded the Soviet models and made attempts to learn from Western countries, there was a stress on the use of colloquial English and the ability to read professional publications in English (Adamson & Morris, 1997). High school graduates were required to master about 3,000 words, be able to read relatively easy English books and newspapers, and be able to do simple conversations. College students were required to be able to read English materials of their specialty; some students were expected to handle a certain level of conversation (Fu, 1986).

The general goal of the English curriculum was for students to acquire a working knowledge of the language, without acquiring foreign ideas, as revealed in the speech made by Chen Yi, a high-level government official, to foreign language students in 1962. He affirmed the

need to master "the foreign way of expression" and learn to think in the foreign language. However, he stressed that this did not mean to learn the "way of thinking of the foreigner." Foreign languages were to be used "in our own way" (Price, 1979, p. 180).

Pedagogy

During the 1950s, Soviet theories, methodologies, and practices in teaching foreign languages were borrowed. Intensive Reading, the adaptation of the Grammar-Translation Method, became the main course of English instruction in China. It was based on a focus text. A lot of time was spent on explaining in detail the meaning and usage of words, analyzing the grammatical structures, and drilling the structures through translation. Western teaching methods, such as Palmer's Direct Method, were criticized as spreading imperialist influences (Dzau, 1990).

In the 1960s many schools emphasized listening, speaking, reading, and writing in the teaching of English. Some schools experimented with "listening and speaking first," which was meant to deal with students' lack of proficiency in oral communications, the so-called "long zi ying yu" (deaf English) and "ya ba ying yu" (mute English) (Fu, 1986, p. 75). Oral skills were emphasized through audio-lingual drills. More dialogues and sentence-pattern drills were added for oral practice. Students were required to devote much of their time to imitating dialogues and memorizing models. Some teachers, unable to speak English fluently, still continued to speak more Chinese than English in class (Price, 1979). Western approaches were consulted and the Audiolingual Method was tried out in many schools (Dzau, 1990).

The Audiolingual Method was developed in World War II in the US army programs to train oral proficiency in various foreign languages. It found its most widespread use in the US in the 1960s. This approach viewed foreign language learning as a process of mechanical habit formation. Therefore, memorizing dialogues and performing pattern drills constituted the core of instruction (Richards & Rogers, 1986). Many English teachers in China, out of the eagerness to train students' oral skills, borrowed this method to their classrooms.

Central to this method was a dialogue or text to be memorized by the students. The teacher studied the text beforehand and selected what he considered to be "yu yan dian" (language points), which would include inflections, idioms, phrases, and grammatical structures. Then drilling of these "language points" would be carried out in class. The texts were usually recorded, ideally by a native English speaker. Apart from listening to the recorded text a number of times, the students spent a lot of time reading it aloud, trying to memorize it (Price, 1979). The purpose of such method was to enable students to achieve automatic reactions through mechanical memorization (Wang, 1981).

During the Cultural Revolution, the Audiolingual Method was abandoned due to its association with American methods of language learning. The teaching of English went back to the Grammar-Translation Method (Adamson & Morris, 1997). Lehmann (1975) observed that in a typical lesson, the teacher would give a word, phrase or sentence in English and ask for choral repetition. Students would then be called on to read aloud individually and to translate into Chinese. The only oral interactions in English would be questioning and answering based on the text, with very little spontaneous use of English by the teacher and students. The emphasis on grammar was obvious in the 1978 college entrance exam, which consisted of three parts: grammar selection, reading comprehension, and translation (Barendsen, 1979).

The "Open Door Schooling" practiced during the Cultural Revolution was also adopted in English teaching. For instance, students might be organized to act as shop assistants at the

Friendship Stores, which served foreign visitors, so that they could use English in real life situations (Dzau, 1990). Another example came from Peking University. After learning a lesson about commune life, students might go to the commune to learn from peasants. Sometimes they stayed there for several months, focusing their English study on agriculture. They learned vocabulary regarding plants and agricultural commodities, described the organization and functions of the commune, reported on good deeds and accomplishments of workers in the commune, and practiced interpreting daily conversation between their classmates and the peasants on the commune. In this way they were supposed to master a lot of practical vocabulary and useful sentence structures (Lehmann, 1975).

Instructional Materials

Political slogans, moral doctrines and negative descriptions of the capitalist society constituted the themes of the textbooks during this period.

The English teaching that remained in the 1950s stressed politics and reality. The majority of the texts were about politics in China. The few original English texts were taken from Communist newspapers from English-speaking countries and from English translations of Russian books (Porter, 1990). The texts largely consisted of political materials, some to promote a strong sense of national identity, some to depict the hardships in Western countries. For example, in a middle-school textbook, "Two American Boys" presented a contrast between the privileged life of a white boy and the miserable life of a black child. In the same book, "A Negro Boy in the Soviet Union" depicted a much happier life of a black boy living in the Soviet Union (Adamson & Morris, 1997, p. 9).

In the early 1960s when English replaced Russian as the primary foreign language, Soviet-style textbooks were also replaced. Due to political reasons, however, direct use of Western teaching materials in China was prohibited. In 1960, a series of new national textbooks, *English*, were compiled by Xu Guozhang (Fu, 1986). The texts were usually based on Chinese texts, the majority chosen for their moral-political content (Price, 1979). The basic format of each lesson was: a short piece of prose as the focus text, a list of new words and expressions, notes on the grammatical structures and idioms, a list of useful patterns with additional examples, questions on the content of the text, grammar and usage exercises, and sentence and passage translation exercises (Xu, 1989). The only materials from abroad were from left-wing publications in England and the US, containing topics like racial discrimination and the labor movement (Ford, 1988). Although texts were not as politicized as in the 1950s, ideological tracts were still an important element, as was revealed in the middle-school textbook compiled during this period. Some typical texts included "Imperialism Will Not Last Long," "New Awakening of the American Negroes," and "Imperialism and All Reactionaries Are Paper Tigers" (Adamson & Morris, 1997, p. 14).

During the Cultural Revolution, the main purpose of teaching was to preach political dogma. Original English texts were considered to have elements of feudalism and capitalism. Therefore, beginners of English were all required to learn such slogans as "Long live Chairman Mao." This was well demonstrated in the textbooks. *Middle School English Book I* (1974) was a good example. There were 13 lessons in the 61-page book, the topics listed below:

Lesson 1	Long Live Chairman Mao
Lesson 2	The English Alphabet
Lesson 3	We Wish Chairman Mao a Long, Long Life

Lesson 4	Our National Flag
Lesson 5	China
Lesson 6	The Red Sun
Lesson 7	Workers and Peasants Work for the Revolution
Lesson 8	The Best Weapon is Mao Tse-tung Thought
Lesson 9	Our Party
Lesson 10	Mao Tse-tung Thought is the Beacon Light
Lesson 11	Learn from the Working Class
Lesson 12	Good Fighters of Chairman Mao
Lesson 13	We are Chairman Mao's Red Guards

Each lesson included simple sentences on the subject, followed by a dialogue, as in Lesson 13:

Part I
Chairman Mao, Chairman Mao!
You are the red sun in our hearts,
You are our red commander.
We are your Red Guards,
We are loyal to you.
Part II
Are you a Red Guard?
Yes, I am.
Is your sister a Red Guard?
No, she is not. She is a Little Red Soldier.
Is your brother a Red Guard?
No, he is not. He is a P. L. A. fighter. (Lehmann, 1975, pp. 78-79)

In general, the texts were highly politicized; almost every text, except the English alphabet, was translated from Chinese political dogmas. The English language was taught only to protect and strengthen the proletariat dictatorship. The instructional materials were so politicized that nothing was taken into consideration about the personal interests of students and teachers, the introduction of the English peoples and cultures, and diverse language acquisition theories.

College English majors, in addition to reading English translations of Marx, Lenin, Engels, and Chairman Mao, could have access to some original English works. But these works were screened beforehand and were supposed to have a leftist flavor. For instance, *Red Star Over China* by Edgar Snow, and *David Copperfield* by Charles Dickens were popular (Lehmann, 1975).

In some good universities, there were language labs and audio-visual aids. But in secondary schools, teachers relied solely on textbooks, at best with some pictures and color-coded flash cards (Lehmann, 1975).

Results of Teaching and Learning

The quality of English teaching during this period was very low, as revealed in the national college entrance examination: the vocabulary required was only 600-800 words (Barendsen, 1979). There were a lot of complaints from the Foreign Ministry about English majors assigned there. They read too slowly, often word by word (the average reading speed

about 50-80 words a minute), and could not understand what they read in the foreign press. They could not understand English spoken by native speakers at normal speed, especially if the speech contained colloquial expressions, idioms, and jokes. They could not speak clearly and naturally. Their written and oral English was often not idiomatic, awkward and hard to understand. Native speakers had difficulty understanding their spoken English both because of their poor pronunciation and strange choice of words. For instance, instead of saying "pork chops," a specialized interpreter might say "swine bone meat" (Dzau, 1990, pp. 53-54). And students who could say "taking the socialist road" in English had no idea how to ask for a cup of tea (Ross, 1993, p. 57). If this was the proficiency English majors had, we can imagine what non-English majors could achieve.

Due to China's lack of contact with English-speaking countries and the position English had in Chinese society, English learned during this period lacked authenticity. The texts seemed to have a higher authority. A foreign teacher recalled a conversation with his Chinese student: "Good morning, teacher, how are you?" "I'm tired out, comrade." The student said surprisingly: "But yesterday you taught us to say 'Fine, thank you, how are you?'" (Price, 1979, p. 183).

Lack of information about the English-speaking world was also obvious. Lehmann (1975) documented his encounter with a group of English majors from Lanzhou University in 1974. The students were curious about the blond hair of one of the delegates. They wondered whether the color was due to old age or suffering! According to his observation, students' pronunciation and grammar may have been impressive, but the style and selection of vocabulary sounded textbookish. Moreover, the students were more confident discussing domestic Chinese politics than talking about the English society. "Very little, if any, attention is given to learning a foreign language in relation to the economic, social, political and cultural milieu of the native speakers of those languages" (Lehmann, 1975, p.83).

Summary

An American historian visiting China in 1972 said "China's people under age 35 are left strikingly uninformed. They know nothing about anything outside their immediate jobs or beyond their own neighborhoods. They ask no questions, have no curiosity and do not speculate" (Chen, 1981, p. 144). With the slogan "zheng zhi gua shuai" (Politics in command), education during the socialist revolutionary period aimed at forging people into collective beings, with no room for the development of individuality, creativeness, and critical thinking abilities. English teaching during this period was thus characterized by the inculcation of political expressions and an extreme lack of understanding of English cultures.

Chapter 4 English Teaching in the Open Door Period (1978-1998)

Background

The termination of the Cultural Revolution led China into a new era, a period of economic development. In 1978, the new leader, Deng Xiaoping, gave a stirring address to China's top scientists and administrators, maintaining that the country's science and technology lagged ten to twenty years behind advanced nations. The government proposed to realize "si ge xian dai hua" (Four Modernizations) in Chinese agriculture, industry, national defense, and science and technology by the year 2000. It was also in 1978 that the Open Door Policy was put into practice, justified by the government assertion that "The histories of various countries show that a closed-door policy harms national development. For socialist construction we need to absorb and utilize the rich knowledge accumulated by the capitalist countries, their advanced technologies and ways of management" (Cleverly, 1985, p. 264).

This was an obvious shift away from the "politics to the fore" in the previous period. Now "Maoist utopianism was replaced by Dengist pragmatism" (Burton, 1990, p. 1), as revealed in Deng's famous saying, "It's not important whether a cat is white or black. A good cat is one that catches the rat." Here *black* or *white cat* refers to capitalism or socialism, and *catch the rat* refers to becoming socially and economically powerful.

To build up an economically strong nation, the Chinese government rightly realized the importance of respecting knowledge and talent, which turned into a call for quality in education. Although the development of a correct political orientation was still stressed in education, courses with ideological and political content were greatly reduced in the school curriculum. Class and class struggle were no longer at the core of all textbooks. For instance, in Citizenship Education and Moral Education, the language used was far less categorical and violent. Slogans such as "Down with so-and-so" and "Long live so-and-so" were gradually dropped altogether (Lin, 1990, p. 19).

With the loosening of ideological control, a variety of education strategies was tolerated, and the government started to show a willingness to borrow ideas from various philosophies, from Karl Marx to the World Bank (Cleverly, 1985). Educational theories of Western philosophers such as Dewey were positively reevaluated. Creative learning--liberating students from traditional rote learning--received heated discussion in journals and magazines (Lin, 1990).

There was also growing respect and trust given to teachers with Western backgrounds and training. Foreign languages were considered to embody the "scientific, progressive, and creative" thinking that China's leaders advocated for modernization (Ross, 1992, p. 250). English became a core course in secondary schools and colleges, and many primary schools introduced it from the third grade. Statistics showed that approximately 97% of China's 320,000 full-time secondary school foreign language teachers taught English (Ross, 1992).

Foreign staff were recruited as language instructors and as teachers in science and engineering. Chinese students and scholars were sent abroad for study or research. By the early 1980s, foreign journals and newspapers had reappeared in university libraries. British and American movies, documentaries, and video shows previously forbidden were now publicly shown on TV and in theatres. Practicing Christianity in China was increasing again. In 1984, there were at least 1,600 churches and over 1.3 million bibles were printed (Cleverly, 1985). Foreign companies flooded into China and created many high-paying jobs.

Despite some twists and turns in the social environment, for example, the "fan jing shen wu ran" (Anti-Spiritual Pollution) campaign in 1982, the "fan zi chan jie ji zi you hua" (Anti-Bourgeois Liberalism) campaign in 1986, and suppression of the student movement in 1989, the big trend of opening to the outside world was irreversible. In 1992, Deng affirmed the need to continue practicing the Open Door policy. English is now in China not only a tool for the nation's modernization, but also a ticket for an individual's social mobility and academic advancement. Currently, English is one of the three required core subjects (the other two being Chinese and Math) in secondary school curricula and College Entrance Examinations. College graduates cannot get their bachelor's degree if they are unable to pass a national English test. Students or professionals who intend to study abroad need to take competitive English exams (administered by the government or some foreign agencies). People who want to obtain a title above associate professor or engineer must pass a foreign language test, preferably English. People with a good command of English can get a job that pays five or ten times that of a college professor. All these factors help to explain why English is currently so popular in China. English teaching during this period also demonstrates a high level of pluralism.

Educational Objectives

The national English teaching outline underwent some obvious changes during this period.

In the 1982 *Secondary School English Syllabus*, foreign languages were considered an important tool for the study of cultural and scientific knowledge and the promotion of international relations. The purpose of teaching was to provide students with basic training in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, with particular emphasis on listening and speaking at the beginning stage, and reading at a later stage, after the basic grammatical structures were mastered (Dzau, 1990).

The *College English Syllabus* published in 1985 and based on social needs acknowledged that the ultimate goal of language teaching is to cultivate students' communicative skills in oral and written forms. It aimed at training proficient reading ability, certain listening and translation ability, and elementary writing and speaking ability, so that students could use English as a tool to acquire knowledge of their specialization (College English Syllabus, 1985).

The *Secondary School English Syllabus* revised in 1987 called for diversity in teaching practice to meet the varying developmental needs of students. Proficiency in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar was regarded the means to rather than the ends of language learning, whose ultimate goal is communicative ability (Ross, 1993).

The 1993 *Secondary School English Syllabus* viewed English as a tool to "develop students' thinking ability; help them acquire more knowledge of foreign culture; strengthen international understanding; and arouse their interest and study and form correct methods and good habits of study so that an initial foundation can be laid for their further study of English as well as future work." Meaningful oral communication was now viewed as the primary goal. Students' communicative competence was to be promoted through a variety of teaching strategies: "Language form has to be combined with its meaning and with what the students think and want to say. Special attention should be paid to turning the language skills acquired through practice into the capacity of using the language for the purpose of communication... When the students realize that they can communicate in English, they will go on learning with more interest and motivation" (Adamson & Morris, 1997, p. 22).

It is obvious that there was a switch from reading skills to oral communication skills in the teaching objectives. Language performance was stressed over knowledge of discrete details. However, the vocabulary requirement for secondary school graduates (1,600 words) and college graduates (4,000 words) did not change in the newest national syllabus (College English Syllabus, 1994). Many teachers considered this a very small vocabulary (Qian, 1990).

Pedagogy

The English syllabus in the 1980s started to call for the study of foreign theories of language teaching and for a synthesis of Western and Chinese ideas. More teachers began to regard linguistics and applied linguistics with respect. With the introduction of Western teaching methodologies, the Communicative Approach has gradually gained favor in China's English teaching circles. This approach was developed in Europe and the United States in the 1970s to meet the communicative needs of foreign language learners. Fluency and acceptable language output is the primary goal of learning. Therefore, error correction is forbidden or strictly controlled. Learners are expected to acquire the language through completing tasks and negotiating information with each other (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). Many foreign teachers as well as some Chinese teachers of English experimented with this method in the classroom. Lessons conducted in this approach were characterized by such activities as discussion, debate, and role play. The use of Chinese was avoided, and grammar was supposed to be learned through various tasks. The traditional teaching and learning style, three-centeredness (teacher-centeredness, textbook-centeredness, and grammar-centeredness), became the target of increasing criticism (Yen, 1987). Many teachers familiar with Western teaching approaches objected to treating students as empty vessels or "Beijing ducks" waiting to be stuffed and prefer to regard language learning as a creative, communicative process promoted by active teacher-student interactions (Ross, 1992).

In real practice, however, Intensive Reading remained a core course in most schools and colleges. Students were taken through a text on a word-by-word, phrase-by-phrase basis; the teacher explained points of vocabulary, syntax, style and content along the way. Typical exercises for practicing were substitution drills, combination drills, translation between Chinese and English, and reading aloud. Grammatical and lexical accuracy, attention to form rather than meaning, explanation and memorization of individual words and their usage were obvious outcomes of this kind of teaching approach. Other reading skills, such as speed, prediction, making inferences, summarizing ideas, and extracting information from the text were developed through Extensive Reading. Language was taught through pattern drills instead of communicative activities (Dzau, 1990).

In primary and secondary schools, the medium of instruction was mainly Chinese. In college, there was a mixture of English and Chinese. For English majors, the lessons were conducted almost exclusively in English (Pride & Liu, 1988). In many classes, especially in economically backward areas, however, students' and teachers' talking time in English was nearly zero. They learned English by speaking Chinese.

The reason why there was limited use of the Communicative Approach was because it requires not only native-like fluency in English, but also native-like knowledge of the culture of English-speaking countries. Not many teachers had received such training. Some teachers, originally teaching Russian and later switching to teach English, especially lacked oral proficiency in English. Another important reason was due to the traditional role students play in the classroom: being a passive learner and listening to the teacher talk. This is in sharp contrast

to the strategies central to the Communicative Approach: with students taking the primary role in learning. In addition, many students taught with the Communicative Approach did not perform well on traditional tests, which focused on accuracy in grammar. Therefore, many students complained that "I don't feel I am learning anything," or "The foreign teacher is not making an effort to teach," and that it was a "waste of time" to conduct the lesson in the Communicative Approach (Yen, 1987, p. 59; Penner, 1995, p. 10).

In the 1990s, the teaching of English was going more and more toward an "eclectic" approach. With a general focus on communication, the overall proficiency in English listening, speaking, reading, and writing all received attention. Use of the mother tongue was permitted, and there were also elements of audio-lingualism in the drills used (Adamson & Morris, 1997).

Instructional Materials

The nine volumes of secondary school English textbooks were revised in 1982 and used in most schools in China throughout the 1980s. The middle-school texts were composed of drills, dialogues and/or short texts, which made use of a combination of audio-lingualism and traditionalism. Exercises included spelling, pronunciation, sentence-construction, grammar, and translation between English and Chinese. Explanations were mostly written in Chinese (Dzau, 1990).

In the high school textbooks, pattern drills disappeared completely, and traditionalism dominated the whole three volumes. Each lesson was composed of a short English text with different styles, including poems, biographies, and a few simplified excerpts of famous literature, e.g. "The Emperor's New Clothes" and "A Tale of Two Cities" (Fu, 1986, pp. 236-7). Some texts still had certain ideological content, e.g. "How Marx Learned Foreign Languages" and "Good and Bad Manners" (Ross, 1993, p. 202). But generally, texts concentrated less on giving a negative impression of foreign countries. Some passages had a scientific theme (Adamson & Morris, 1997). The texts and exercises were organized strictly according to grammar. Therefore, many texts sounded unnatural and artificial. They rarely presented opportunities for students to engage in meaningful communication (Cowan et. al. 1979).

Other popular English textbooks included those compiled in the English-speaking countries, for example, *English 900* from the United States and *New Concept English* from England. *Follow Me*, a TV series (produced by the BBC) aimed at cultivating conversational skills and relying on social settings, was China's longest-running extracurricular program of the 1980s, with an audience of 20 million. Some elite secondary schools considered the national English textbooks too easy and opted to use *New Concept English* compiled by L. J. Alexander. The four-volume textbook resembled the national textbook in that the first volume was based on pattern drills and conversations, and the following volumes were based on focus texts. The advantage was that the author was a native English speaker and the texts consisted of original English passages in culture, society, history, science, and technology. This series particularly appealed to Chinese teachers and students because it stayed close to traditionalism yet offered authentic language input (Ross, 1992).

In the 1990s, more and more diversified English textbooks were being published, with various language teaching theories embodied, and in many cases accompanied by colorful pictures, audio or video tapes. Cultural information about the English speaking countries is presented through descriptions of people, food, festivals, sports, and places of interest, etc. More materials on science and technology were selected. Materials aimed at cultivating social and interpersonal skills were also included. For instance, among the twelve units in the high school

English book 3B published in 1998, five units were devoted to cultural information, describing the USA, New Zealand, Gandhi, Helen Keller's teacher, and black slaves. Three units were concerned with modern science and technology, and three units taught students study skills, how to deal with part-time jobs, and how to find a job (*Senior English for China*, 1998).

Results of Teaching and Learning

The social atmosphere during the open door period contributed tremendously to the raising of English standards in China. Generally, students now have a much larger vocabulary than those 20 years ago (1,600 words in 1998 versus 600-800 words in 1978 for a high school graduate). The widened use of audio-visual aids and the freedom to get exposure to foreign movies, TV programs and publications greatly enhanced students' listening and reading abilities as well as their understanding of the foreign cultures. The experiments with the Communicative Approach helped to let students open their mouth and practice speaking skills.

There are a lot of problems as well. A teacher from Australia said students were interested in and knew much more about the United States, but not other English-speaking countries. Students tend to have more competence in grammar and reading comprehension than oral communication, as a foreign teacher once commented, "Many of our Chinese teachers have an excellent command, or more accurate, knowledge of the language, but it's a command largely from books, and it's largely through the eyes rather than the ears" (Porter, 1990, p.49).

In such a large country as China, foreign language proficiency inevitably varies widely, from the elite schools in urban areas to regular and vocational schools in rural areas (Ross, 1992). During 1993-97, I taught freshman English to about 600 students at Tsinghua University. From my own teaching experience, I discovered that a high-school graduate from the countryside might barely have a vocabulary of 1,600 words, as required by the national syllabus, and have literally no ability in listening and speaking. However, a high-school graduate from an elite school in Beijing or Shanghai might have a vocabulary of 5,000 words and be quite proficient in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This is understandable due to the differences in financial conditions, level of exposure to Western media, and most important of all, availability of qualified teachers. For instance, in a poor area like Shanxi province, 60% of secondary school English teachers were not fully qualified, many of whom received no college training at all (Wang, 1986). Similarly, in Jiangxi province in the 1988-89 academic year, there were altogether 13,754 secondary school English teachers. Only about 5% had a bachelor's degree, about 33% had a three-year college certificate, and the rest were rated "under-qualified" (Dzau, 1990).

Summary

English during the open door period was considered by the society an indispensable tool for acquiring advanced technology and for interacting with the rest of the world. Increased autonomy in the economy yielded a greater diversity of viewpoints and higher tolerance of differences among people. The loosening of ideological controls by the government brought more and more authentic English language and culture into China. The influx of foreign experts and students who return from abroad, the translation and adoption of foreign texts, and the use of western technology and equipment all promote educational and cultural exchange between schools in China and abroad.

Chapter 5 Conclusion and Future Prospects

English Teaching Across Periods: Similarities and Differences

English, from its initial introduction into China, has been closely tied to its large historical environment. The mid-nineteenth century missionaries introduced it passionately for religious purposes. The Qing government reluctantly accepted it in the hope of empowering the country with Western technologies. The twists and turns of English education in the past century in China are result from the quest for modernization and the interplay of Western values and Chinese traditions.

In terms of the purposes of teaching English, these three periods are similar in that the governments all viewed English as the gateway to national modernization. However, during the republican period and open door period, English was also regarded as a tool for international understanding and for individuals' social and economic mobility. Therefore, the introduction of foreign cultures and the fostering of students' interest were saliently documented in the English curriculums of these two periods. In contrast, during the socialist construction period, education took great pains to subordinate individuals to the Party and guard against foreign influences; foreign languages were only "tools of political struggle in the service of the proletariat" (Ross, 1993, p. 45). As a result, students' personal interest and foreign cultures were almost totally ignored in the curriculum of this period.

With regard to the specific teaching objectives, the stress on oral versus reading skills has been a matter of debate throughout the three periods. This dilemma represents differences in both social needs and language theories. During the republican and open door periods, English was widely used in social, economic, and educational settings, which led to an emphasis on oral skills in teaching guidelines, especially at the secondary school level. In the early 1960s, although English was not widely used in society, oral skills were stressed in keeping with the audio-lingual theory that language learning begins with listening and speaking. At the college level, reading skills were always considered important because students were expected to acquire knowledge of their specialty through reading foreign materials.

In actual pedagogical practice, the traditional Grammar-Translation Method dominated throughout the three periods in government schools, despite various efforts to experiment with other methodologies such as the Direct Method, the Audio-lingual Approach, and the Communicative Approach. One of the reasons was the lack of qualified teachers with native-like proficiency in oral English. Still, many see the basic reason as lying in the deep-rooted Chinese tradition of learning. After an in-depth analysis of the Confucian model of society, Yen (1987) contends that in the classroom, "The teacher's words were always truths and truths were to be parroted and memorized but not to be questioned. Docility, passivity and conformity were what such education demanded of its pupils" (p. 52). Moreover, for Chinese students and teachers, "books are thought of as an embodiment of knowledge, wisdom and truth. Knowledge is 'in' the book and can be taken out and put inside the students' heads. Hence the reverence with which books are treated, the value they are assigned, and the wish to learn by heart what they contain" (Maley, 1990, p. 97). This view of knowledge leads to the persistence of the teacher-centered, textbook-analysis-based Grammar-Translation Method. Therefore, Ford (1988) concludes that "The key to meaningful English curriculum reform in China would appear to be the necessity of redefining traditional teacher and student roles" (p. 27).

The selection of instructional materials to a great extent reveals China's relationships with other countries. During the republican period when China was very receptive to Western ideas,

teaching materials were mostly imported from the United States. During the socialist construction period when China was literally in isolation, so what constituted the English textbooks was China-based topics and political slogans. During the open door period when political ideology coexisted with the evaluation and learning of Western ideas, original English texts were used more, tempered with some ideology-oriented texts for the early levels. I believe that as China continues to open to the outside world, teaching materials will bring more foreign cultures to Chinese students, and more diversified approaches will be incorporated in the materials.

Recommendations for Future Practice

As China deepens its relationship with the West, English will continue to be a utilitarian tool for China's economic development and individuals' social and economic mobility. Moreover, it is a powerful force for individual and cultural transformation. The English language has brought to China not only advanced science and technology, but also the Western idea of democracy. As St. John's University saw approximately seventy years ago, the learning of English should assist in widening students' mental horizons. This effect has gradually occurred in China. Communicating with the outside world and contrasting Chinese culture with Western cultures has led many Chinese people to speculate on the legitimacy of some of their own traditions. As Lin (1990) comments, since the 1980s the Chinese people have turned "less obedient, less submissive, and less dependent... Many Chinese people became individuals aware of their personal rights and responsibilities" (p. 116). This certainly has more substantial consequences for Chinese society. Democracy, human rights, and individuality have become the pursuits of more and more people. It is important to bear in mind the transformational power of English when constructing the English curriculum in China.

Setting educational objectives

Before we decide how to teach, we should first make clear what to teach. After nearly fifty years of emphasis on collectiveness and subordination of the individual to the communist regime, the development of students' individuality is finally acknowledged and encouraged in education policies. The new term, "su zhi jiao yu" (Qualities Education), which emphasizes the emotional, spiritual, and moral development of students, has been advocated in all levels of education. Imagination, creativity, and critical thinking abilities have become the goal of Chinese education for the new century (Xia & Shi, 1998; Workers Daily, 1999).

This goal is also important for English education. Many Chinese students studying in the US find it is difficult to write critically in English because they are used to writing in conformity with the political and academic mainstream. Students are not supposed to challenge teachers, authorities, established knowledge, etc. They tend to say "We all know" instead of "I believe" (Snively, 1994). Matalene (1985), an American teacher who once taught English in China, said that when her students were asked to write an essay on the topic of English study, almost all wrote things like "to learn English as a tool, to adopt the advanced technology, to support the Four Modernizations, to make a contribution to the Motherland" (p. 794). It is obvious that without an adequate development of individuality, there can be no critical thinking. Without critical thinking, there would be no challenge to the status quo, thus no impetus for social development.

To incorporate this goal into English teaching, it is necessary to transform the teachers' mentalities in the first place. As Ford (1988) discovers,

> In a true discussion, it is likely that there is no single answer to the question at hand. It is also possible that students might have better answers than their teachers. Both are anathema to the Chinese teachers I observed. They felt most comfortable, it seemed, when they were dealing with topics and questions that had clear-cut answers which they possessed but students did not. (p. 182)

Teachers who hold such a view of knowledge will find it impossible to tolerate, let alone foster, students' critical thinking abilities. Teachers need to know that instead of being an authority and judge in the classroom, they should act as a facilitator, a catalyst in the learning process. They must understand or believe that there is no one best way of understanding, and students can have wonderful ideas (Duckworth, 1996). Only in this way can the teacher pay close attention to students' needs and interests and bring their initiative into full play. As Ross (1992) asserts, "Encouraging student motivation must precede the teaching of basic skills and must be rooted in an understanding of the particular needs of individual students" (p. 245).

Culture is an integral part of language learning. Misunderstandings between people may arise from reasons other than linguistic incompetence. Therefore, one of the aims of English education should be to help students acquire a knowledge of the conventions, customs and attitudes of native speakers revealed in their speaking and writing so that students can understand the behaviors of native speakers (Liu, 1997).

English teaching in China has been unbalanced since the language was introduced. In my opinion, it is impractical, and sometimes discouraging, to set unified teaching objectives for all students throughout the country. A school or a district should have the freedom to set its goals according to its local conditions and the learners' needs in considering whether to emphasize oral or written skills, or decide on the amount and kind of vocabulary the learners need most. The current 1,600-word requirement for high-school graduates is only one third of the requirement for English in Japan and one fifth of that in Russia (Shangguan, 1999). For students in elite schools, especially those in the coastal areas, this is a very small vocabulary, and the skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing may all be important for students' future career. However, for schools in the rural areas where few teachers are orally proficient themselves, it is unrealistic to enforce the "listening and speaking first" requirement, which will very likely create anxiety for teachers and students alike.

Choosing pedagogy

Every teaching approach has its strengths and weaknesses for different learners. It is unwise to engage in mechanical imitation, as in the importation of American textbooks in the republican period and the transplant of the Soviet system in the 1950s. Here, Wang (1981) offers a thought-provoking opinion regarding the merits and demerits of the Direct Method and Grammar-Translation Method:

> Students trained with the direct method were often poor in spelling and vocabulary, as well as in their ability to judge whether a sentence is grammatically correct... A French linguist told Chinese scholars that the grammar-translation method may be likened to teaching cadets to fly a plane by giving lectures and explanations on the technique of flying a plane, but seldom asking the cadet to fly it. In contrast, students taught by the direct method are like cadets who are suddenly asked to fly, and who then fly high up in the sky, taking no heed of any danger that may occur in the flight. (p. 657)

Similarly, indiscriminate use of the Communicative Approach may result in failure, something many foreign teachers have experienced in the Chinese classroom. Scovel (1983) discovered that many Chinese students resist attempts to make them express an opinion in the classroom, for fear of embarrassing the teacher (by not knowing the answer) or facing ridicule from fellow students. Wu (1983) warned that a topic arousing interest and discussion in the Western culture, e.g. sexual promiscuity and sudden wealth, may be inappropriate for China. Role-playing is considered by many students a waste of time. Instead, they want the foreign language teacher to explain difficult points of grammar or the subtle difference between words. "Chinese study habits are deeply rooted and a frontal attack on them is pointless" (Maley, 1990, p. 103). Therefore, I believe it is important to adapt the approaches for Chinese students.

Unlike ESL (English as a second language) learners, EFL learners do not live in the target-language community. Therefore, sole dependence on intuition may result in artificiality and inaccuracy (Rivers, 1983; Krahnke, 1987). Marton (1988) likewise worries that too many grammatical errors may "stigmatize them [learners] socially in certain types of encounter with native speakers" (p. 53). I think that language accuracy is also important, especially for people who use English for academic or professional purposes, for instance, publishing English papers, presenting at international conferences, or drafting contracts for a company or the government. In these cases, grammatical errors are likely to discredit the writer, cause misunderstandings, or even damage the relationships between partners. Moreover, Chinese and English are two languages with huge linguistic differences. Explicit grammar instruction is considered essential in my interviews with two Chinese graduate students in the United States. For them, grammar knowledge is "the basis for further advancement in English proficiency" and "the instrument for monitoring language production (i.e. speaking and writing) and ensuring accuracy in such production" (Yang, 1999, p. 41).

The question remains: how can we foster students' individuality and creativeness under current conditions? First, teachers could encourage free speech through discussion and debate. They should make it clear beforehand that there is no one best answer, and that students' personal opinions are valued over the opinions stated by authorities. For students who have a relatively low level of proficiency or students who are not used to speaking in class, oral practice could begin with the retelling of a text. Again, the teacher should tell the students to use their own words instead of directly reciting from the text. This principle applies to writing as well. Basic training could begin with writing about topics directly related to the student's personal life, e.g., describing his hometown, keeping an English diary, summarizing a favorite book. As with campus life in the republican period, extensive practice in English can be conducted through role-playing, performance, speeches, etc. We can also draw some useful elements from the "Open Door Schooling" practiced in the Cultural Revolution. Students could be encouraged to go to work in hotels, friendship stores, or tourist attractions to experience direct interaction with native English speakers. Independent study abilities can be developed through doing projects, for instance, introducing a famous figure from world history, interviewing people about the current economic reforms, developing a poster on campus life, etc.

To carry out these teaching methods effectively, the examination process will have to be changed. Traditional exams were confined to what had been done in class. "Chinese students were good at absorbing new information and knowledge, but limited in their horizon and deficient in analyzing and synthesizing what they had learned. Although scoring high grades, they often lacked ability and skills to solve practical problems" (Du, 1992, pp. 56-57). Exams

have always been the "the commanding baton" of education. If teachers and students are constantly worrying about grammar-oriented exams, they are unlikely to engage in these practice-oriented activities. Multiple-choice items should be decreased or eliminated from the test. Instead, tests based on free writing and speaking should be administered wherever possible.

Developing instructional materials

As discussed earlier, English can be a powerful tool for international understanding and cultural transformation. A wide range of cultural issues thus should be introduced through instructional materials. Textbooks in the republican period put too much emphasis on Western classic literature, whereas those in the socialist revolutionary period included too much political content and relied heavily on Chinese situations. The current textbooks, on the other hand, tend to focus on introducing American culture. I think it is necessary to include cultural information about other English-speaking countries: England, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Topics regarding the Chinese society (e.g., political and economic reforms, campus life in the 1990s) could also be selected from English newspapers and magazines such as *China Daily*, *Time*, etc. Familiarity with and interest in China-related topics may stimulate discussion in the classroom.

Authentic language should be introduced into instructional materials as early as possible. Many students in the republican period started to read original English literature in middle school, but currently most high school students, even college students, are still using simplified materials. This does not help them enlarge their vocabulary and acquire authentic language. Of course, original materials should be selected to conform to students' English level, as difficult materials can cause extreme anxiety and frustration. Simple materials written in original English could include jokes and children's stories.

Instructional materials should include texts of a variety of styles. Students must learn some classic literature, but practical, everyday English may be more important for a student's future life or career. Therefore, oral skills such as how to order food in a restaurant, how to talk about hobbies, and written materials such as memos, resumes, business letters, academic papers should be introduced.

The Internet is also a good source for learning English. Statistics indicate that by the end of 1998, 2.1 million Chinese people had access to the Internet, and the number is growing exponentially (Yang Z., 1999). Via the internet, students can easily read a foreign newspaper, "visit" a foreign country, or "attend" a writing class just by clicking the mouse. This is efficient and motivating. Those who cannot yet afford to go abroad will have the possibility to contact the outside world, and thus expand their intellectual horizons.

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